

# Conference of Grand Masters Prince Hall Masons, Inc.

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## Office of the Executive Secretary

March 2, 2026

The Honorable Members of the Maryland General Assembly  
Maryland State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Letter of Support — HB 1251 (2026) “Health Facilities and Health Insurance – Palliative Care – Required Access and Coverage (Edna G. Neal Palliative Care Act)”

Dear Madam President, Mr. Speaker, and Members of the General Assembly:

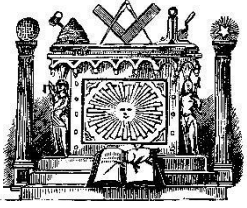
I write in strong support of HB 1251 (2026), the Edna G. Neal Palliative Care Act, on behalf of my office as Executive Secretary of the Conference of Grand Masters Prince Hall Masons, Inc. (COGM) and as a Most Worshipful Past Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Maryland.

HB 1251 would establish a clear statewide expectation that—on or after October 1, 2027—Marylanders receiving care in specified settings are informed about palliative care and have meaningful access to it, and that the Maryland Department of Health adopts minimum standards, while requiring certain insurers and plans to provide coverage for palliative care. This is a practical, dignity-centered policy: it supports pain and symptom management, care coordination, and the emotional and spiritual needs that arise when families confront serious illness.

For Maryland’s Prince Hall Masons and Prince Hall Eastern Stars, this is not an abstract issue. Across our state, more than 10,000 members, and the loved ones who depend on them, include caregivers, seniors, veterans, and working families who will face life-limiting illness—often with unequal access to supportive services depending on location, provider capacity, and insurance design. HB 1251 moves Maryland toward a consistent standard of care and transparency so families are not forced to navigate serious illness without timely information, options, and support.

Importantly, Maryland would not be acting alone. Other states have already recognized—through law and formal public policy—that palliative care access and patient information are matters of statewide responsibility:

New York’s “Palliative Care Information Act” requires clinicians to offer terminally ill patients information and counseling regarding palliative care and end-of-life options, reflecting a public policy judgment that patients should not reach crisis points without being informed of supportive care choices.



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Illinois has established a Hospice and Palliative Care Advisory Board in statute to guide and strengthen statewide hospice and palliative care policy and practice—another example of states formalizing infrastructure to improve access and quality.

Nationally, states have adopted palliative care advisory councils/task forces and related initiatives, demonstrating that this is a widespread, multi-state policy priority—grounded in improving quality, coordination, and equitable access for residents facing serious illness.

HB 1251 follows this well-established policy direction by pairing access + informed choice + coverage, and by directing Maryland to set minimum standards to make palliative care reliably available—not merely aspirational.

Prince Hall Freemasonry has long emphasized service, relief, and the moral obligation to care for the vulnerable. In that spirit, I respectfully urge the General Assembly to issue a favorable report and to pass the Edna G. Neal Palliative Care Act (HB 1251) to ensure Maryland families can access compassionate, high-quality palliative care when it is needed most.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to the people of Maryland.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Emanuel J. Stanley

Executive Secretary, Conference of Grand Masters Prince Hall Masons, Inc.

Most Worshipful Past Grand Master, Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Maryland

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cc: Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee; Bill Sponsor(s); Maryland Department of Health; Edna's Love, Inc.